MUHAMMAD JAFAR THANESARI

Kala Pani: Tavarikh-e Ajib

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: Presented here is the translation of selected passages from the Urdu book *Kālā Pānī yā Tavārīkh-e ʿAjīb* by Muḥammad Jaʿfar Tẖānēsarī. The book's introduction states that the alternative title "Tavārīkh-e ʿAjīb" is a chronogram denoting the year the book was completed, so the book must have been ready for publication in 1302 AH, which corresponds to 1884–1885 CE. The earliest editions for which I have seen citations have publication dates of 1879 (Raja 2006, 168) and 1884 (Allen 2006, 185). The book has been reprinted multiple times with slightly differing titles, some of the reprints being: (Tẖānēsarī n.d.), which I have; (Tẖānēsarī 1974) in the U.S. Library of Congress; (Tẖānēsarī 1962) in the New York Public Library; (Tẖānēsarī 1964) cited in Hedāyetullah (1968, 172, 215); and (Tẖānēsarī 2004) cited in Raja (2006, 215). The present translation is based on the undated reprint by the Iqbāl Academy, Lahore (Tẖānēsarī n.d.).

There are two references to English translations of the book: Sen (2004, 18) mentions that there is an unpublished English translation in his possession. Allen (2006, 327) refers to an English translation with the title "In Exile (A Strange Story)" published in 1964, but he does not mention the translator's name or the publisher's name and location. I have not been able to find this book or another translation anywhere, and am therefore preparing a fresh English translation.

This slim book of 112, 8.5 x 6 inch pages is an important document in Indian history. The author and some of the people portrayed in the book were central characters in the Ambala State Trial of 1864, in which they were accused of "waging war against the Queen." Coming on the heels of the Indian Uprising of 1857 and the Indian Northwest Frontier War of 1863 against what the British termed "Frontier Fanatics Camp," this trial is a key event in the Wahhabi Jihad Movement against the British Empire. Hunter, among others, discusses this trial and T̲h̲ānēsarī's role in it in great detail (see 1876, 84–100). He makes much of the Wahhabis' "chronic conspiracy within our territories" and tries to invoke it to explain why the Frontier Fanatics Camp lived on despite several attempts by the British Army, some very disastrous, to annihilate that camp:

> The truth is, that while we have been trying to stamp out the Frontier Settlement beneath the heel of a military force, the fanatical sects among our Muhammadan subjects have been feeding it with an inexhaustible supply of money and men; pouring oil upon the embers which we had left for dead, and nursing them again into a flame.
>
> (Hunter, 44)

T̲h̲ānēsarī is one of Hunter's favorite villains, being a link in the chain of the said supply of money and men! T̲h̲ānēsarī had read Hunter's book while writing *Kālā Pānī.* Obviously dissenting with Hunter's characterization of the Wahhabis and his depiction of the Ambala Trial, T̲h̲ānēsarī accuses him of gross exaggeration and "making a snake out of a rope and a mountain out of a molehill" (n.d., 72).

Kālā Pānī furnishes much insight into the ideology, convictions, and character of the Wahhabis, both as devout practitioners of a branch of Islam and as dedicated freedom fighters against British rule in India. The Wahhabis comprise a small minority among Muslims, but their theological as well as political influence has been formidable. As such, the book is also of interest to historians of the Indian Wahhabi movement. An example of such a history is Hedāyetullah's thesis (1968) on Sayyid Aḥmad of Rā'ē Barēlī, the pioneer of that movement. In his study, Hedāyetullah draws material from *Kālā Pānī* as well as from another book by T̲h̲ānēsarī (1891) on the life of Sayyid Aḥmad. Another example is Raja's Ph.D. thesis (2006) on the foundational texts of Pakistan, in which the Indian Wahhabi movement is discussed at length. T̲h̲ānēsarī's *Kālā Pānī* turns out to be an important source of information for Raja's analysis (*ibid.*, 56–64).

There is rekindled interest in the book these days because some writers on current affairs perceive a link between the recent religiously-motivated acts of terrorism and the Wahhabi movement of one hundred fifty years ago. Two examples of works exploring this link are Allen (2006, 185–211) and Jalal (2008, 330). Allen, in particular, is quite fascinated with T̲h̲ānēsarī and the events involving him preceding, during, and succeeding the Ambala Trial. Allen quotes at length from *Kālā Pānī*, introducing it as follows:

> In 1884 a remarkable autobiography was published in Delhi. It was entitled *Kala Pani: Tarikh e Ajeeb* (The Black Water: a Strange Story) and was the

> first printed memoir by an Indian Wahhabi, telling of his arrest, trial and transportation […] to the Andaman Islands, where he spent sixteen years in exile.
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> (2006, 185)

His political judgments aside, Allen's account has several factual errors: The book's alternate title in Urdu is *Tavārīkh-e ʿAjīb*, not *Tārīkh-e ʿAjīb* as Allen cites. This minute difference would be inconsequential, except that the latter is the title of a different, earlier book by Thānēsarī (see Thānēsarī 1892) which is, in fact, mentioned in *Kālā Pānī* itself! The exile period is not sixteen years but eighteen years. A very serious error is where Allen says:

> Muhammad Jafar's autobiography begins with a brief history of his early years: how after losing his father as a child he had lived like a vagabond until he taught himself to read and write, becoming a petition-writer at a magistrate's court. Then a chance meeting with a Wahhabi preacher changed his life and he came to regard his association with British infidel justice as highly corrupting.
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> (*ibid.*, 186)

This brief history is nowhere to be found in *Kālā Pānī*. Allen's information is most likely derived from a different set of documents written by Thānēsarī and submitted as evidence to the Ambala Court during his trial. Perhaps Allen's source for these documents is Hunter, who quotes long passages from them, while remarking: "these, under the title the Counsels of Ja'far, form one of the most interesting documents ever filed in a State Trial" (1876, 88–89).

The book also provides a rare description of life in the Andaman Islands, which served as a penal colony for the Indians condemned to life imprisonment by the British Judiciary. As Sen points out:

> Scholarship on the first fifty years of the Andaman Islands penal colony is marked by an acute paucity of first-hand narratives by the convicts themselves. Such narratives are relatively abundant in studies of Australia, and to a lesser extent French Guiana. Researchers such as Yang and Anderson, who study the overwhelmingly non-literate British-Indian convict diaspora, must necessary [*sic*] glean most of their information from government documents, and from the private writings of British administrators and visitors to the penal colony. A rare Indian convict autobiography from the Andamans in the nineteenth century is an Urdu narrative by the Maulana Muhammad Jafar Thanesari, a Wahhabi arrested in 1863 for conspiring to smuggle funds to anti-British mujahideen in Afghanistan.
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> (2004, 2)

Sen examines *Kālā Pānī* to gain an understanding of "the nature of the penal colony, the nature of the penal experience, and the nature of a convict self-representation" (3). His paper is, to date, the most thorough study of that book.

Finally, *Kālā Pānī* also has the distinction of being the first autobiographical work in Urdu. This is the opinion expressed in the article "Autobiography—Urdu" in the *Encyclopaedia of Indian Literature* (Hanfi 1987, 287) as well as in the very similar article "Autobiography" in the *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Urdu Literature* (Samiuddin 2007, 79). Of course, the book is not solely an autobiography or a personal diary, as some parts of it can also be classified as travelogue. Many passages of the book consist of sermons, doctrinal writings, and fantastic religious explanations of many events in the author's life.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Upon my return from the Andaman Islands, every friend that I met started asking me questions about my twenty-year imprisonment, my journeys, and the condition of those islands. As it would have been rather cumbersome to repeat again and again the same details of what took place over twenty years, I decided that I would simply write up the circumstances and events that I encountered during my two decades in that region. So here is a brief narrative for anyone curious about my experiences.

I wrote the book *Tavārīkh Port Blair, Musamma beh Tārīkh-e ʿAjīb*[1] in April 1879, shortly before my appeal for release was summarily rejected by His Excellency the Governor General of India. That rejection led most of the officials, and even the general populace, to conclude that I would never be freed from the British prison. But I could not despair from Divine Compassion. In fact, in the preface of the above-mentioned book I wrote: "Hope is the pillar of life. Staying full of hope, we should await what the future has to disclose." I had even begged the readers of the book to pray that our Just Government be caused to free my humble person from a life in the midst of unclad savages so I could return to India and finish the second volume of the book in the language of my country. It was soon after my writing those heartrending sentences that unexpectedly, due to Divine Assistance, and without any effort on my part, the

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[1] That is, *History of Port Blair, Also Known as A Wondrous History.* This book has been published, see Thānēsarī (1892).

Noble Lord Rippon issued the order for my release.

The title of my first book *Tārīkh-e ʿAjīb* is also historical.[2] Fortuitously, the addition of a single letter to the above title gives the new title *Tavārīkh-e ʿAjīb* [Wondrous Histories] that encodes a number larger than the previous number by six, and accounts for the six years that intervened between the preparation of the two volumes! So here is that very second volume, promised to be published upon my return to India.

Now I humbly declare this to my noble readers: I have written this book in the form of a diary, employing the simple language of everyday use. I have also reproduced, as exactly as I could remember, all the stories and sayings that were narrated to me by others. Nevertheless, to the Lord Who knows all that is unknown to us, I pray to be forgiven for any deviation from truth that has been committed due to my shortcomings as a human. And I hope that the just critics and scholars will correct with a forgiving pen any of my errors that they notice. I also appeal to my readers to pray for me that just as the Bountiful Provider freed me from the calamitous British prison, He also grant me a propitious end and deliver me from the calamitous prison that this world is. Amen. Again, Amen. "*And there is no ability in me but through God; on Him do I rely, and to Him do I turn*."[3]

God Almighty and Exalted says: "*Do people think that they will be left at ease on saying 'We believe,' and that they will not be tested? And We did test those before them. And God will certainly know those who are truthful, and will certainly know those who are liars*."[4] As far as I know and understand, our arrest for this trial was also in accordance with the above verse, strictly for testing the people and discerning the truth tellers from liars. For there stands the Divine Promise: "*And never will God grant to the disbelievers a way (to triumph) over the believers*."[5] So if we were not intended for that testing, then we could never have received any harm from the British Government.

Furthermore, in accordance with the saying of the Holy Prophet (Peace be upon him): "*Everyone is tested commensurately with the degree of his*

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[2] This title is a chronogram for 1296, the year of the book's preparation in the Hijri Era. That is, in the *abjadī* numerical system of Arabic, the title encodes the number 1296. A chronogrammatic phrase is called a *historical phrase* in Urdu. So the author is engaging in word play by stating that the title of this book about history is itself historical.

[3] Qurʾān 11:88.

[4] *Ibid.*, 29:2–3.

[5] *Ibid.*, 4:141.

faith."[6] In this trial, those who avowed to have faith and to love God were tried to the extent of their steadfastness, and the truth and falsehood clearly stood out. So this book should be regarded as a commentary on the verse quoted above.

After this introduction, I will now describe the actual trial from beginning to end. If the reader will constantly keep in mind what the above verse and hadith assert, then the mysteries and subtleties of this history will reveal themselves to him. But faith is a prerequisite to fully absorb every thing. I confess that, on account of my own lack of abilities and defects of character and faith, I myself have not been able to fully comprehend thousands of enigmas hidden in this trial.

Chapter 2: Start of Love Affair[7]

Toward the end of 1863 CE, corresponding to 1280 AH, a great war started in the Yaghistan territory, at the western frontier of India, mainly because of the intransigence of the British Government. General Chamberlain was in command of the British troops, which suffered many casualties in the Ambeyla Pass area. The invasion by a foreign government had no justification, so Mullā ʿAbdu'l-Ghafūr, the Akhund of Swat, accompanied by many of his disciples, rushed to the front [to fight the invaders]. A large number of Afghans and local Pathans, in their own defense, also joined the battle against the English army.

The Government campaign had been mounted to dismantle and annihilate the mujahideen settlements at the northwestern frontier. That objective became secondary in the larger confrontation. To guard their liberty, the masses rose up against the Government. Of course, the mujahideen also fought valiantly in their passion for martyrdom. So the battle was fierce and continued for two or three months. General Chamberlain himself was gravely wounded. The casualties soared to about seven thousand. Troops were pulled from nearly all the Punjab cantonments to reinforce the army at the battlefront. While the battle was raging at the frontier, Lord Elgin, the Viceroy of India, regretful at the provocation he himself had caused on the hills of Chamla[8] [and grief-stricken at the consequences] suddenly died. India was left without a ruler.

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[6] This sentence is from hadith 4023 in *Sunan Ibn Mājah*.

[7] "Love" has a spiritual sense here. The author considers his involvement in the jihad movement as an expression of his love for God, and hence his arrest, trial, and punishment as the tribulations that befall a lover.

[8] Due to a typographical error, it is spelled "Chamba" in my copy of the book.

It was at this delicate period that a Pathan by the name of Ghazan Khān, who was a sergeant of the mounted police posted at Paniput Station in the Karnal district, found out something about me and sensed that such information would be of much worldly benefit to him. So, on 11 December 1863, corresponding to 28 Jamādiu'l-Ākhir 1280, he related to the Deputy Commissioner of Karnal an elaborate tale of his fabrication, feigning deep concern about the British Government and alleging that Muḥammad Jaʿfar, the *Nambardār*[9] of Thanesar, was complicit in the supply of money and men to the mujahideen fighting at the frontier.

Well, upon hearing this report, the Deputy Commissioner of Karnal relayed it by telegram to the District Office of Ambala, the district within which my town Thanesar is situated. No sooner had the informer left after completing his errand, than one of my acquaintances arrived at the Deputy Commissioner's residence to pay him a social visit. In the course of conversation, the dignitary mentioned the new piece of intelligence to my acquaintance. After the conclusion of his visit, when this gentleman returned to his station, he mentioned the news dolefully to his servant Kādā. Kādā happened to be a neighbor of mine, so, upon hearing the news, he rushed to Thanesar to apprise me of it. But, as luck would have it, he arrived in Thanesar rather late at night, and even though he came straight to my home, I had already retired to bed. Seeing my gate shut, and guessing that I was asleep, he did not want to bother me at that time, and decided to see me later in the morning. Destiny pushed him away from my doorstep!

Now here is what transpired in Ambala: As soon as the information reached there by telegram, a warrant was issued for the search of my house. In the darkness of the night, Captain Parsons, the Superintendent of Police, accompanied by a sizable contingent, proceeded toward my house. What an irony of Fate! Two men set out on the road simultaneously, one from Karnal to warn me and the other from Ambala to hunt for me. My well-wisher from Karnal arrives early and yet cannot do anything! The other man reaches my location as late as 3:00 AM, yet he surrounds my house on all four sides and forces me out!

It is impossible to darn what Destiny has torn.
In vain will the Needle of Contrivance indulge forever in stitching.

Stepping out, I saw, standing on my doorstep, the Superintendent of Police, armed with the warrant to search my house. He showed me the warrant and demanded that I let him enter. I gathered at once that something was wrong. I wished to have the inside of the house searched first so the police would not come into contact with an incriminating letter placed in the sitting suite. But no one can stop what has to happen from happening! The entire area from the main gate [of the compound of the residence] to the threshold of the house was pitch-dark, and the door of the sitting suite at the north of the threshold was not visible at all. Nonetheless, the Superintendent insisted on inspecting the sitting suite first. To enter this suite, it was necessary to open two doors that were locked from the inside. I tried to be clever and called Munshī ʿAbdu'l-Ghafūr (who was sleeping inside, together with some other people) by name in a loud voice, announcing to him that the Superintendent of Police was waiting outside and asking him to open the door at once. I meant this to be a message to the people inside to destroy that very poison-laden letter. In fact, the Superintendent suspected that I was attempting to signal something, and tried to stop me. But that letter was not destined to be rent! The people inside became too nervous to understand the hint and opened the door immediately.

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[9] Chief Accountant of a municipal administration. This person was the fiscal representative of his municipality in dealing with the British Government.

The police began searching the sitting suite and noticed the letter straightaway. Destiny had caused me to write that letter only six hours before the search. It was addressed to the leader of the caravan [of the mujahideen] and contained a coded message about the dispatch of a few thousand guineas. The police also got hold of some old letters from Patna and some sent by Muḥammad Shafīʿ Ambālavī. Although these letters did not in themselves contain any damaging information, they clued the police in to consider the search and investigation of the Patna group and Muḥammad Shafīʿ Ambālavī.

The police took Munshī ʿAbdu'l-Ghafūr—a resident of the district of Gaya in the Bihar province who was working as a clerk in my office, as well as ʿAbbās—a Bengali boy who used to sleep in my sitting suite, into custody. The police had strong suspicions about me; for my arrest, however, they neither had a warrant nor any other officially approved document of the kind that was needed in a court case, so they left me alone.

Chapter 3: Escape

Once the police had left my house, I started contemplating what I should do next. The police were in possession of evidence and proof of my involvement, and the Government was still full of wrath because of the recent Frontier War. I settled upon running away from the scene and letting some time pass. Trying to save my life through this cowardly conduct seemed the best course of action. Although I was not under arrest, the police had their spies all around me and were watching my every movement.

I consulted my mother, who was alive then, and my wife; they both consented to my idea of escaping. Then, to execute the plan, I proceeded as follows: On 12 December 1863, I traveled from my town to the Peepli village where the *taḥṣīl*[10] office, police station, etc., were located, and pretended to seek the counsel of the administrative employees and policemen there as to what I needed to do for my exculpation. They were unanimous in advising me to go to Ambala to learn the details of the case and to try to find out the identity of the informer.

My act of asking people for suggestions and advice was, of course, a deception. In the evening, I took the Peepli Main Road, ostensibly to travel to Ambala. The people in the gathering were gazing at me with much sympathy and sadness. As soon as I mounted my horse, everyone was sure that I was bound for Ambala.

As long as there was daylight, I kept riding on the road to Ambala. After about an hour it became quite dark. By then, no other travelers were in sight even far off. I turned, taking a route through the forest, and, at 1:00 AM arrived at a location, decided beforehand, close to Thanesar, within the boundaries of the land that I owned. There my mother, wife, children, and brother Muḥammad Saʿīd were gathered to see me for [what could be] the last time, and bid me farewell.

Well, after meeting my mother for the last time, I, accompanied by my wife and children, rode in a large, comfortable oxcart and arrived at Panipat, thirty-two *kōs*[11] away, at the break of dawn. I did not enter the Panipat city limits and said goodbye to my wife and children while stopped on the road. At that time, when I parted from someone, I did it with little hope of seeing that person ever again. I had already instructed the oxcart driver to drop my family in Panipat and then go somewhere across the river Yamuna. I had told him that the oxcart and the pair of oxen, worth at least three hundred rupees, were his to keep provided he did not let anyone know the whereabouts of my family and did not return to Thanesar until the furor subsided.

It is beyond my powers to recount what I felt when, opposite the Post Office of Panipat, I parted forever from my family. I took a one-horse carriage bound for Delhi and managed to reach there, a distance of forty

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[10] A regional administrative unit, smaller than a district.

[11] *Kōs* is an old unit of distance, approximately equal to two miles.

kōs, the following day. [In Delhi] I stayed at the residence of the merchant Miāñ Naṣīru'd-Dīn. There I met Miāñ Ḥusainī of Thanesar, Ḥusainī of Patna, and a Bengali gentleman by the name of ʿAbdu'l-Lāh. The latter two had come the same day, bringing with them some guineas from Patna. I took the guineas from these people and gave them to Ḥusainī of Thanesar instructing him to carry this sacred consignment as expeditiously as possible to the caravan [of the mujahideen].

After Ḥusainī of Thanesar had left, I tried to persuade the two messengers who had brought the money to accompany me to the east, since, in view of the forthcoming tumult in Ambala and the already conducted search of my house, there was no security left in the Punjab. I was about twenty-five years old then and brimming with religious zeal. I paid no attention to the ups and downs of what took place in the world and had complete faith that God would take care of all matters concerning me since it was His Cause that I was pursuing. Hence, I was confident that, due to the strategy I had adopted, no one would find me. I thought they would look for me in Ambala and to the west of it.

Self-assured that my approach was quite brilliant, I took no precaution in Delhi to keep my identity secret. I myself walked to Chandni Chowk, clad in my everyday dress, to hire a *shikram*.[12] Then, on 15 December, the three of us openly traveled in this *shikram* to Aligarh. While on the road, I tried to cajole the drivers to move fast by offering them a lot of gratuities and rewards. My goal was to get to Aligarh as quickly as possible and to take a railway train from there. I was still sure then that with the route I had taken no one would think of looking for me in this direction. Presumptuous about having crafted a perfect scheme, I had disregarded Destiny. Well, leaving my case here, let us turn to what the police in Ambala were up to.

On 12 December, the Superintendent of Police brought the letters found at my house, as well as the men that had been taken into custody there, to Ambala. By examining the material, he was able to get the Government to issue a warrant for my arrest. He came back to Thanesar with the warrant and, not finding me there, created pandemonium in the city. He searched hundreds of houses and apprehended scores of men and women. My old mother, my twelve- or thirteen-year old brother Muḥammad Saʿīd, and his wife [*sic*] were all arrested and excessively beaten and tortured. Even purdah-observing housewives were subjected to heart-rending cruelty and dishonor. A team was dispatched to Panipat to catch my wife, but she was spared detection owing to a brave deed by the courageous mother of Maulvī Raẓīu'-Islām.

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[12] A four-wheeled, covered carriage.

Among those tortured was my juvenile brother Muḥammad Saᶜīd. He was too immature to comprehend the glories of faithful devotion and perseverance. He could not endure the severe beatings and, afraid for his life, revealed that his brother had escaped to Delhi. It was my own fault for having shared such an important secret with this child. That fault led to my arrest.

Captain Parsons took the next express train destined for Delhi, with my brother in tow. At the same time, efforts to search for me continued in the Punjab. Posters advertising a 10,000-rupees award for my arrest were distributed. The residence of Muḥammad Shafīᶜ in Ambala camp was also searched. Fortunately, he was in Lahore at that time, but at his home the police arrested his brother Muḥammad Rafīᶜ, Maulvī Muḥammad Taqī, and a clerk Munshī ᶜAbdu'l-Karīm. They were terrorized into believing that they would be hanged if they did not tell the truth. Frightened for their lives, both Muḥammad Rafīᶜ, who was Muḥammad Shafīᶜ's own brother, and Maulvī Muḥammad Taqī, who preached in the Friday mosque and was a very old-time employee of Muḥammad Shafīᶜ, agreed to become approvers[13] against Muḥammad Shafīᶜ. They saved their lives by testifying exactly as ordered by the police. Munshī ᶜAbdu'l-Karīm, who refused to become a witness according to the instructions of the police, was imprisoned for life, notwithstanding his complete innocence.

Once Captain Parsons arrived in Delhi, he also threw this city into complete disorder. Inns and town gates were shut. Thousands of persons were searched and hundreds were arrested. During this chaos, Captain Parsons learned about my and my two companions' journey to Aligarh, as well as the particulars of the *shikram* we had hired and the time at which we had departed. This information was, of course, immediately relayed by telegraph to Aligarh, with the orders for my arrest.

Chapter 4: Capture

As luck would have it, the telegram traveled two hundred miles from my hometown and reached Aligarh at about the same time we did! The police, waiting for us along the roadside, surrounded us as soon as we reached our destination! We were taken to the District Superintendent of Aligarh, who sent us to the Office of the Magistrate. From there my companions and I were sent to the detention room; we were held there, pending the arrival of a reply by telegram.

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[13] One who confesses his own crime and becomes the Government's witness against his accomplices.

The same evening, Captain Parsons happened to arrive while I was busy offering my namaz,[14] after having performed a *tayammum.*[15] Catching sight of me in this prison exhilarated him immensely. He ordered that I be locked up securely in the condemned cell. I was accordingly taken to a very dark, narrow room, which was locked securely and was guarded by two or three constables.

Once in the condemned cell, reason returned to me. Both my escape and my conceit in crafting a stratagem were against what God had ordained. It gradually dawned on me that my escape complicated the case enormously. All the miseries suffered by me, my relatives, and my friends were the consequences of that abhorrent deed of mine. To proclaim love and then run away when that love is put to test is not the attribute of a true lover. In the words of Ḥāfiẓ:

The tribulation of grief is no business of a stranger.
It is ordained to visit only our most special devotee.

In the evening, the guards on duty at the Aligarh jail asked me what kind of crime I had committed that required the stationing of three men to guard my cell, when usually a single watchman is sufficient even for criminals condemned to death. I replied, “I shirked from the duty that my Master had assigned to me. That is why He is angry with me and had me captured en route while I was fleeing.”

This is where I tasted my first jail food. I was served two loaves of bread and some spinach. The spinach did not contain a single leaf; it was full of thick stalks that were too hard to chew. As for the bread, a quarter part of it seemed to be nothing but sand and clay. Well, I took a few bites and was grateful to God for it. Afterwards, on many occasions when I spent time in jails, I found the food everywhere to be similar. In truth, prisoners are fed less than what they need and are always hungry. When they are given wheat for grinding [as part of their prison labor], they chew away large quantities of raw wheat because of their hunger. They also soak raw flour in water and drink this thick concoction, adding sand or dirt to make up for the portion consumed. Similarly, the good vegetables grown in the jail gardens are either sold outside or appropriated by the jail officials, while the waste stalks, unfit for eating even by animals, are chopped up with hatchets and cooked to serve the prisoners. These hungry souls eat this food heartily. Newcomers to prison feel tormented for a day or two having to eat such food, but when the Torment of Hunger overtakes them this very meal starts to taste more delicious to them than pilaf and curry, and they eat it with relish. In our world, Hunger fashions Taste.

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[14] The ritual prayer performed five times daily.

[15] A form of ritual cleansing that is performed before a prayer when water is not available for the regular ritual washing.

Chapter 5: Test of Love

The following day, a triumphant Captain Parsons rode with the three of us in a *shikram* headed towards Delhi. Before I could get into the *shikram*, they put cuffs around my hands, fetters around my feet, a chain around my neck, and, to function as a bridle, another chain linked to the neck chain. The end of this bridle was held by an armed soldier sitting behind me. Captain Parsons and an Inspector of Police sat to my left and right, butting their sides against mine, each with a fully loaded pistol in hand. Captain Parsons kept threatening to shoot and kill me at once if I so much as made a move. During the entire journey from Aligarh to Delhi, we were not allowed to get out even for acute human needs, let alone being given anything to eat or drink. At prayer times, I performed the *tayammum* and prayed with gestures, without asking anyone for permission. The carriage kept moving steadily and they silently watched my prayers with much amusement.

With great discomfort, as we were bound from all sides in iron, we eventually reached Delhi. There we were moved to a cellar beneath the bungalow of the District Superintendent of Police and locked up, as if buried alive. The next day we were transported from Delhi to Karnal and then from Karnal to Ambala. It was quite late at night when we reached Ambala. There, without being given a morsel to eat or a drop to drink, the three of us were locked up in three separate condemned cells and kept there until the beginning of April.

The following day [after our arrival in Ambala], the Superintendent Captain Parsons, the Deputy Inspector General of Police Major Winkfield, and the Deputy Commissioner of Ambala Captain Tye—like Gog and Magog—entered my cell at dawn and demanded that I tell them truthfully everything related to the trial because, they emphasized, that would be best for me. I told them that I did not know anything. Captain Parsons at first kept threatening me, then started beating me. Soon the beatings reached such extreme that I fell down. At that moment, Captains Tye and Winkfield stepped out of the room. Ultimately they all left, disappointed, since I did not tell them anything even after this terrible beating.

Having experienced this torture and cruelty, I came to believe that they would not leave me alive. I had missed a few days of fasting during Ramadan, so from the next day, I started fasting to make up for those fasts.

The next day when I was fasting, Captain Parsons again came into my cell around dawn and immediately started pummeling me. After a while he took me in his buggy to Deputy Commissioner Tye's residence, where Tye and Major Winkfield were both present. This time these gentlemen behaved very kindly to me, offering me a written guarantee to free me and appoint me to a high government position if I told them the names of the people involved in or assisting the jihad movement. They also warned me that if I refused to cooperate with them, I would be hanged. I did not accept their proposition.

On hearing my reply, Captain Parsons said something to the other two in English, took me to another room, and started beating me again. From 8:00 o'clock in the morning to 8:00 o'clock in the evening, I was probably subjected to more beating than anyone else has suffered, but by the Grace of God, I bore it all. During this time, I kept praying to my Provider to keep me steadfast at this time of trial. He [Captain Parsons] was thoroughly frustrated, and finally, after 8:00 PM, sent me back to my cell.

As I had fasted the whole day, I broke my fast with some leaves from a tree outside [Captain Tye's] bungalow. Then, once back in the jail, I ate a little of what was saved for my dinner, paid my gratitude to God, and fell asleep.

At the same time that I was being beaten at the residence of Captain Tye, poor Munshī Ḥamīd ʿAlī of Thanpur, the *Taḥṣīldār* of Naraingarh, was humiliated and dismissed from his prestigious position simply because he had written a letter to me a few years before my arrest. The letter was about some unrelated, mundane matter, but some Court staff members that bore him enmity had misrepresented what the letter said. This honorable gentleman was sitting, disconsolate, outside on the jail's verandah. Seeing his crestfallen face, I totally forgot my own misery. His situation led me to think that I was so wretched and worthless that a totally innocent person was suffering only for the offense of writing a letter to me. I wished to be punished instead of him. I kept praying with utmost sincerity for his welfare. It eventually turned out that he was absolved of the false accusations and restored to his former position. He still holds a First Class position in the Punjab.

No attempt was ever made again to entice me into becoming an approver.

Chapter 7: Trial

[...] During the month of April the case was presented for trial to the Magistrate's Court of Ambala. We were taken from the condemned cells to the Court. I then came to know that, under the threat of hanging, my brother Muḥammad Saᶜīd had turned approver against me, and Muḥammad Rafīᶜ against his brother Muḥammad Shafīᶜ. Using similar threats, fifty to sixty other people had also been recruited as approvers, the majority of these consisting of maulvis and mullahs. Often while testifying they used to glance at us and weep uncontrollably, but they felt powerless, given the threats of torture, and ultimately, of hanging. These witnesses were themselves kept in the detention house, like prisoners, pending the completion of their testimony in the Sessions Court. The Government spent hundreds of thousands of rupees to provide them with good food and clothing, through the services of the police.

Torture also continued. A young boy by the name of ᶜAbbās had lived for a long period in my house. He was expected to parrot a fabricated and false statement that he was taught, but after looking at me with feelings of affection, he hesitated in testifying against me. The same evening this child was beaten so brutally that he died of the injuries before the scheduled time of his appearance to testify in the Sessions Court. To preempt bad publicity, Captain Parsons spread the false report that this child had died of some disease.

On the first day of my appearance in front of the Magistrate, my brother was scheduled to testify and was held in detention for that duty. Through a police constable, he sent me a message to the effect that the police had beaten him severely and had made him prepare a written statement that, in fact, had been dictated to him, but he was planning to recant that testimony. I sent the reply that since my imprisonment or release was under God's control, he should not change his statement for my sake, as that could result in his being seriously punished for lying under oath. Moreover, I pleaded to him that, since I was already in prison, he should not jeopardize his own life too, as that would cause our poor old mother to die of grief. But in spite of my advice, when his turn to testify came, he retracted earlier statements. Listening to him openly contradicting them, the police officers were furious, but since he was still a minor, they were not able to punish him in any way. They had no choice but to cancel his testimony, and delete his name from the witness roll.

[...]

After a week of testimonial proceedings, our case was forwarded to the Sessions Court. Until then we were confined in separate condemned cells. At this point, we were transferred together to the detention house. The period of our isolation and mutual separation was long. We were elated to be united again. I often used to recite this couplet by Saʿdī:

Sitting with the feet in fetters, but facing comrades,
Is preferable to being in a garden, in the company of strangers.

For all of us, the four-month-long period of seclusion and solitude had been of immense spiritual benefit. We felt as if our hearts were cleansed to transparency and could experience within themselves the Divine Lights. Prayers and fasts elevated us to the levels of ecstasy that are hard to attain even after long periods of arduous spiritual discipline. The company of Maulvī Yaḥyā ʿAlī and the guidance from him were most inspiring. Muḥammad Shafīʿ and ʿAbdu'l-Karīm seemed dispirited, but the remaining nine of us, while confined in the same detention facility [as those other two], were quite happy and contented.

[…]

After a while, the case advanced to the Sessions Court with Major [Herbert] Edwardes as the Presiding Judge. Again a week passed by in various formalities. Muḥammad Shafīʿ and ʿAbdu'l-Karīm had retained as attorney Mr. Goodall, a barrister practicing law in the Magistrate's Court. When the case was resumed, then Maulvī Muḥammad Ḥasan and Maulvī Mubārak ʿAlī, who were representing the people from Patna, engaged the services of another attorney, Mr. Plowden. Mr. Plowden was an experienced, astute, and senior man. He came to the detention house to get our signatures on an affidavit document that he had prepared. Eight of the accused, namely, Maulvī ʿAbdu'r-Raḥīm, Maulvī Yaḥyā ʿAlī, the merchant Ilāhī Bakhsh, Ḥusainī, Qāẓī Miāñ Jān, ʿAbdu'l-Ghaffār, and Munshī ʿAbdu'l-Ghafūr signed the document. I did not sign, telling them that, being familiar with the law myself, I wanted to represent myself. Maulvī Yaḥyā ʿAlī was not in favor of seeking the help of a lawyer, which he regarded as a sheer waste of money. Indeed, had it not been for other people's persuading him to refrain, he was willing to go ahead and declare all his good deeds to everyone. But at the same time, he had such a simple and non-argumentative nature that, when he was asked to sign the affidavit, he did it unquestioningly.

So now Major Winkfield and Parsons represented the Government as prosecutors, two lawyers represented the ten defendants [other than myself], and I was my own attorney. Each time someone took the witness stand, the Session Judge used to first write down his statement then interrogate him. After the Judge had finished, further interrogation was done by the two government prosecutors and the two defense lawyers, in that order, and finally by my humble self. I was thoroughly familiar with the details of the case, and knew well the circumstances and abilities of the witnesses. Moreover I had some experience with the law, so I used to interrogate the witnesses more aggressively than others, asking them a lot of questions that God Almighty made to surface in my mind. Many witnesses used to find my questioning beleaguering.

The trial being public, its court proceedings were a spectator sight for many Europeans and natives. Four noblemen from the Ambala district, two being Hindus and two Muslims, were appointed Assessors.[16] When all of the witnesses had completed their testimony, the defendants were asked to make their statements. The two defense lawyers submitted written statements on behalf of the ten defendants [other than me]. Then the Judge addressed me and asked me what I wanted to say. I started dictating my detailed statement, arguing against and refuting the false accusations made by the Government. The Sessions Judge wrote down a small initial part of my statement and then said to me in a very angry tone that there was nothing for me to gain with that kind of bombast. He asked me, instead, to confess my crimes, and throw myself at the mercy of the Court. I decided to just keep quiet after being taught such an unreasonable lesson, so I said to the Judge that the only thing I wanted was justice, and I had little hope of receiving it from him.

I wanted to present about ten or twelve men to vouch for me, but that was not allowed. Many such witnesses appeared, but to no consequence, on behalf of Muḥammad Shafīᶜ and others. Indeed, hundreds of sworn statements were presented to attest to the good character of Muḥammad Shafīᶜ, and to his being a loyal, well-intending subject of the Government. Referring to these statements, the prejudiced Judge wrote that each and every sentence in those certificates was an evidence and final argument that the accused deserved the sentence of death.

Our able, seasoned lawyer, Mr. Plowden, had cited many law texts and legal precedents to prove that since the sites, such as Malka and Sittana, where the battles took place were situated outside the Government territories, the Government's case, accusing the defendants of assisting the combatants there, was without merit. He argued that terms such as "taking up arms," "Her Majesty the Queen," and "rebellion" mentioned in Article 121 of the Indian Penal Code were inapplicable to any wars taking place outside the Government's territories. [...] The Sessions Judge and the prosecuting attorneys were speechless on hearing these arguments and had nothing to reply but "Yes!" and "Correct!" But the English had already made up their biased minds and had set the law aside from the first day of the trial. So, after this argument, the case was postponed for a few days for further consultations. Those consulted included Governor John Lawrence and some other high officials, all of whom were unrelenting in their desire to destroy us. They had been beguiled by some selfish persons into believing that unless Wahhabism was rooted out by hanging the few poor defendants of this trial, the British Government would not survive in India. What did the law matter then?

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[16] The persons appointed by the Court to assist the Judge in arriving at a verdict.

Chapter 8: Decision

After a long postponement, the last Session took place on 2 May 1864. The Judge had brought with him his analysis and decision, which he had written at home to conform to the Governor's wishes. As soon as he took his seat, he addressed the four Assessors telling them that, having attended the case proceedings from beginning to end, they were now to write down their opinions. We noticed that whenever the four Assessors looked at our faces, tears welled up in their eyes, as at heart they wanted us to be freed, but since they felt that the Judge and the Commissioner were definitely bent upon punishing us, they took fright and wrote down that they found us guilty as charged.

After securing this legal pretext, the Judge picked up his already prepared opinion, and started reading it. It answered Mr. Plowden's weighty arguments by unsubstantial prattle. Then addressing me, he pontificated as follows: "You are a clever and knowledgeable person. You know the law. You are also a nobleman and the *nambardār* of your city. But you used all your knowledge of the law and your intelligence to combat the Government. You undertook to supply men and money to the enemies of the Government. Except when trying to refute the argument in the trial, you never uttered a word of loyalty to the Government, and never helped anyone prove that you meant well. You will therefore be hanged, and all your assets will be confiscated by the Government. Even your dead corpse will not be given to your heirs, but will be buried with ignominy in the jail graveyard." He finally added, "It will give me great pleasure to see you hanged." I listened to his entire speech calmly, but in response to the last sentence, I said, "It is up to God, not up to you, to decide who lives and who dies. God Almighty has the power to end your life before mine." This indubitable answer angered him deeply. But what could he do to me beyond sentencing me to be hanged? He had already given me the utmost punishment he could so there was nothing more left under his control.

What I told him, however, must have been God-inspired. While I am still alive, he departed to the Land of Nonentity due to sudden death, shortly after pronouncing my sentence.[17]

I distinctly remember my own condition after hearing the sentence of hanging. It made me exceedingly happy, happier perhaps than being given dominion over seven kingdoms. It seemed as if Paradise and its nymphs were directly in my view. After my sentence, the sentences of Maulvī Yaḥyā ʿAlī, Muḥammad Shafīʿ, and all the other men were read in sequence. For three of us, including myself, Maulvī Yaḥyā ʿAlī, and Muḥammad Shafīʿ, the sentence was to be hanged, as already mentioned. For the other eight culpable persons, the sentence was transportation for life and confiscation of all property. I noticed that Maulvī Yaḥyā ʿAlī was also very pleased. Muḥammad Shafīʿ's face turned ashen, but he did hold himself together as well as he could.

On that day, a large number of policemen, and male and female visitors, had gathered in the Court to watch [the proceedings]. The compound of the Ambala District Court was nearly filled to capacity. As soon as the sentence was pronounced, a large group of armed police constables, under the orders of Captain Parsons, approached me and said, "You have been sentenced to be hanged. You should be crying! Why are you so cheerful?" I answered them, "Because we are hopeful that we will attain martyrdom, which is the greatest blessing. But you cannot comprehend that." At this point, it is worth mentioning that Parsons was even more prejudiced than Edwardes. The brutalities to which he subjected us from the first days of the trial were of such a nature that their details simply could not be described. But there exists a Retaliator Who works on His own schedule and at His own discretion. Not long after our punishment was announced, this daredevil [i.e., Parsons] lost his sanity [as punishment] in this very world, and then moved on to the next World of Nothingness.

A number of people that were watching us started to cry after hearing our death sentence. Some consoled themselves by saying that God willed it so and His Will has to be accepted. Some of them were speechless with grief. During this commotion, the police took us to the jail building. Scores of men and women kept looking at us from both sides of the street on our way to the jail. In the jail, the regular clothes that we were wearing were removed and confiscated, and we were given ochre-colored prison uniforms to put on. The three of us that had been given death sentences were locked up in three separate condemned cells. The other eight were placed in the jail barracks with other prisoners.

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[17] The Judge, Sir Herbert Edwardes, died from pneumonia three and a half years later (Allen 2006, 191).

On the night of 2 May, the cells in which we were confined seemed worse in size and darkness than Nawab Sirāju'd-Daula's "black hole" in Fort Calcutta! This first night of ours [was so hot that it] gave us a taste of Hell. In the morning, we described our discomfort to the jail supervisors and requested them to let us sleep outside the cells at night. They, too frightened themselves, refused, and left us. But no sooner had they left the jail room than a mounted employee of the telegraph office arrived with an urgent envelope in hand. When the envelope was opened, the letter inside was found to contain the instruction that the three men sentenced to death were to be allowed to sleep outside their cells at night. Noticing this clear Divine Assistance, the jail supervisors immediately told us their new orders.

Three new gallows were installed for us and silken ropes were elaborately woven to serve as our noose. Also, the trial files were sent to the Punjab Chief Court to approve our hangings.

Chapter 9: Chief Court

Our two attorneys, having received some extra fees, went to the Chief Court, along with Maulvī Muḥammad Ḥusain, Maulvī Mubārak ʿAlī, my brother Muḥammad Saʿīd, and Muḥammad Shafīʿ's son ʿAbdu'r-Raḥmān. The Government prosecutors and attorneys, including Major Winkfield, had already arrived there. I asked for a copy of the trial proceedings and prepared a well-argued appeal, which I sent to the Chief Court through the Jail Superintendent. The case was discussed, with much bustle, in several sessions of the Chief Court. Our attorney, Mr. Plowden, again forcefully argued that Article 121 did not justify our detention, and that citing that Article for our imprisonment contravened the law altogether. He added that the Government needed recourse to some other regulations in dealing with us. Mr. Robert Kusset, Judicial Commissioner, concurred with this legal opinion openly in the chamber, but again the case was postponed for a few days for the purpose of further consultation. In the interim, the newspapers concluded that the accused were going to be released and the delay was just for the time needed to prepare the new sentences. Our family gave so much credence to that opinion that they sent me a new set of clothes to wear when returning home [as a freed man]!

The Chief Court took a long time to resume the trial. Possibly, even the authorities in England were consulted. From 2 May, the day when our sentences were read, to 6 September, we stayed locked up in the condemned cells. The jail staff was busy in various preparations for our hangings. We had become quite a popular spectator sight for the English. Every day hundreds of European ladies and gentlemen visited the jail to revel in the extravaganza of our condemned cells. But finding us in high spirits, unlike most other criminals waiting to be hanged, often puzzled these tourists. Frequently they asked us why we were so happy when we knew we would soon be hanged. In reply, we used to simply say that we were happy because, according to our religion, anyone who is killed so cruelly in the path of God is granted the status of martyr.

[...]

One evening while the three of us were sitting in the jail together having a conversation, our guards, who had discussed the matter earlier among themselves, asked us to flee, right at that instant, in the dark of the night. They said that if we ran away, they might be disciplined for negligence of duty and might even get a short jail sentence, but they were willing to abide their hardships if our lives could be saved. We thanked them for their goodwill and bravery, and told them that God would reward them in this world and the next for their benevolent intentions, but we said that we would not escape since, if God willed us to be freed, He would Himself arrange it. I added that when He did not approve, I was caught in Aligarh and brought here. I would not repeat my offense. As the poet says,

The beloved has put a chain around my neck.
He drags me wherever it is his pleasure to go.

[...]

Chapter 10: Black Water

The one who deserved the gallows was put under house arrest.
How freedom came within reach, but was then held back!

It is worth mentioning here that during the time we were confined to the condemned cell, it was revealed to a person[18] favored by God that we would not be hanged but would be banished to Black Water and that I would return from there alive and with dignity. It was not until two months later that the stay of execution for us was announced. But, because of the prophecy, we had become quite convinced that we would not be hanged and would instead be transported for life. Accordingly, I had immediately shared this good news with my brother and some friends. However, the entire British Government seemed to be bent upon hanging us, and there was no apparent reason for anything contrary to happen.

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[18] This person is unnamed; possibly it is the author himself.

At that time, if anyone uttered a single word in our favor, he was surely going to be arrested. Scores of persons of our city got arrested, for example, because something originally belonging to me was found in their possession, or because, after my house and property were confiscated, they had offered shelter to my children and family. At that time, even if the King of Constantinople had pleaded for me with the English, his plea would have been disregarded. In such a situation, the idea of a stay of execution was simply impossible and unimaginable.

But look at what the Rectifier of Hearts did! When a large number of English men and women visited us in our condemned cells, and found us jubilant, the news [of our odd behavior] spread far and wide among the English people. The same English people who were our mortal enemies then started thinking that we should not be given the punishment of martyrdom that we so eagerly yearned for. Instead, they wanted us to languish in Black Water, toiling and suffering.

Exactly as prophesied, the Deputy Commissioner of Ambala visited us in our condemned cells and read to us the Chief Court's Order. He told us that since we rejoiced at our sentence of hanging, regarding it as martyrdom, the Government, which had no desire to give us our coveted punishment, had commuted our death sentence to lifetime imprisonment overseas.

After our sentence was read, we were moved from the condemned cells to the regular jail barracks where other prisoners were kept. Following the jail regulations, our beards, mustaches, and hair were clipped short with scissors, making us look like fleeced sheep. [...]

Chapter 11: Hard Labor

Another event that shows God's discretion at work is worth narrating. Because of my heavy weight, the silken rope for my hanging was specially woven to be strong, and, similarly, the gallows for me were erected using particularly strong wood planks, but Destiny showed its might by having my sentence changed. In the meantime, an Englishman from England proper received the death sentence so all the equipment readied for my hanging was used for a poor European compatriot of theirs. *Whoever digs a pit encounters that pit in his path!* The rope was elaborately designed to be put around my neck, but God the Almighty, possessing absolute power, the Alterer of what is in the hearts, overtly saved me and had the same rope put around a white man's neck. After that extraordinary event occurred, people started counting that mysterious act of God among the Signs of God. So, once the Englishman's hanging had taken place, people cut the rope into pieces and collected the pieces as sacred relics.

The following morning, the three of us were sent, together with the other prisoners, to perform the required hard labor. The prison's Warden Nabī Bakhsh, Assistant Warden Raḥīm Bakhsh, and other Indian officers of the prison were all our sympathizers, but fearful of the Jail Superintendent, they put us to operate the *d̲h̲īñklī*[19] for pounding paper. This was the most difficult duty in the jail. Our leg muscles became sore after operating the device for just a little while.

But just then Dr. Butson, also known as Reno, the Jail Superintendent, happened to walk into the jail's paper mill area. Seeing us working on the *d̲h̲īñklī* made him furious at the Warden. He assigned to Muḥammad Shafīᶜ and Maulvī Yaḥyā ᶜAlī the easy work of unwinding yarn. Then he took me by the hand to a canal into which documents were thrown after tearing them by hand. There he showed me the pile of trashed office documents and said that the pile probably also contained documents that I myself wrote. He told me to tear the documents into pieces, after reading them if I wanted, and drop the pieces into the water. So my hard labor was not without amusement and enjoyment. Thanks to Providential Assistance, my companions were also spared from the usual prison labor.

[...]

While we were still in the Ambala jail, a severe epidemic of typhoid with migraine broke out. Nearly a quarter of the prisoners perished in that epidemic. A high fever, headache, and death followed each other with dispatch. A number of poor prisoners that were sentenced to be detained for only a month or two also died. [As a preventive measure] prisoners were moved from barracks to tents pitched outside the jail, but the epidemic followed them.

I did not escape the epidemic myself and was admitted to the jail hospital after severe illness. Dr. Butson treated me with dedication, but my fever did not subside in the least. Although my illness did not reach the headache stage, I could not eat or drink anything and lay almost unconscious for several days. The English medicine had absolutely no effect on me. Baffled, Dr. Butson asked me what medicines I took for this kind of disease. I told him that I only took Indian medicines and had never had any English medicines before for the present illness. He asked me if I knew the names of those medicines [that I had taken before] and I replied that I did. He asked me to write down the names of those medicines so he could order them from the stores. On a piece of paper I wrote down the names of such delicious and invigorating medicines as apple preserve, guava preserve, pomegranate syrup, extracts of violet and lily flowers, silver toppings, etc. He immediately ordered them from the market for me. Having had a terrible taste in my mouth due to my illness, I started taking all of those [delicious] medicines at once. The fever, of the burning kind,[20] was cured in a day by the syrups. The preserves and silver worked as tonics, so I also regained much of my strength and energy. When the doctor visited me the next day, he was very pleased to find me in better health and for my convalescence, he prescribed a diet of soup, meat, and milk! […]

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[19] Foot-operated lever that controls a thrasher to beat or pound some material. Here, the *d̲h̲īñklī* seems to be for pounding wood pulp to produce paper.

Chapter 18: Departure for Black Water

Our journey to Black Water began on 8 December 1865 from the port of Bombay on the boat called *Jamnā*. This ship, belonging to the British Government, was staffed entirely with English people, and none of its officers or crew members spoke the Hindustani language. One of the prisoners accompanying us on the ship with some knowledge of English was Mōtī Lāl Bābū, and it was through him that we were able to communicate with the ship's staff. At that time, I did not know a single word of English.

On the ship, the diet of the Muslim prisoners consisted of boiled rice and lentils and dried fish. Hindu prisoners were given *čabīnā*.[21] For our Punjabi companions, accustomed to eating bread all the time, it was a real hardship to have to eat rice twice a day for a whole month.

As soon as the ship reached open seas, it encountered storms and waves, and started rolling and pitching violently. Most passengers got seasick with nausea and vomiting. A prisoner from the Punjab who had only five years left in his seven-year term of imprisonment, got so sick that he died on the ship. We performed the Islamic rituals of washing his body and wrapping it in a shroud, recited the requisite prayers, and, after attaching several stones to his body, lowered it into the sea.

The guards belonging to the Marine Platoon accompanied us on this journey. They were exceptionally kind to us.

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[20] A disease classification according to the Indian system of healing, referred to as Greek Medicine.

[21] Chewable, roasted grain.

When we arrived in the vicinity of Ceylon (also known as Lankā), the sea storms intensified into a veritable tempest. Our ship, which must have weighed thousands of maunds,[22] bobbed upon the water like a little ball. The waves sometimes seemed to move towards the ship in walls of water as tall as a mountain, and the ship sometimes seemed to descend many spear-lengths into the sea.

Our ship reached Port Blair of Andaman on 11 January 1866, after thirty-four days of sailing. The total duration of our journey from Ambala to the Andaman Islands was eleven months.

Chapter 19: The Andamans

Looking from afar on the ship, the multitude of black rocks on the Andaman coast appeared as if there were herds of buffaloes roaming in the waters. Shortly after we dropped anchor, a group of Port Blair guards came in boats and boarded our ship. I asked an Indian sailor among them whether there was any demand in this place for secretarial skills and what languages were used in office work. The man guessed that I was an amanuensis, so, to reassure me, he said with some exaggeration: "This place is effectively run by secretaries! They have the power to do whatever they want." After the many disappointments I had suffered in Karachi and Thana, his reply was quite consoling.

In a little while, a number of large launches and boats came from the shore. We boarded these and were taken to the island called Ross, which housed the administrative headquarters of the Andaman settlements. On approaching the coast, we saw scores of secretaries and well-dressed Muslim clerics in their characteristic white attire lined up to receive us. While we were still aboard the boat, a man who was standing on the quay inquired in a loud voice whether Mr. Muḥammad Jaʿfar and Maulvī Yaḥyā ʿAlī were present on the ship. I answered in the affirmative about both. Upon hearing my reply, some people immediately jumped into the water and helped us disembark from the boat.

Once out of the boat and in the port, we found out that Maulvī Aḥmadu'l-Lāh was eagerly awaiting us. He had arrived in Port Blair six months earlier, on 15 June 1865, after a year of imprisonment in Patna. He had heard about our anticipated arrival from some of our fellow prisoners of the Thana Jail who had arrived here in another ship two days earlier. The people who had received us on the quay, and had expedited our disembarkation, were there at Maulvī Aḥmadu'l-Lāh's behest. At the port, we also saw many other people who had gathered to meet us. We shook hands with and embraced the members of this crowd.

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[22] Maund was an old Indian unit of weight, approximately equal to forty kilograms.

Then we took leave of the other prisoners who had been remanded with us and went to the house of Munshi Ghulām Muḥammad, Chief Clerk of the Marine Department. There we met Maulvī Aḥmadu'l-Lāh and several other prominent persons. The three of us[23] started living in that house.[24] Our fetters were cut the same day, we were provided nice clothing to wear that had already been made in anticipation of our arrival, and we dined in that distinguished company while sitting around a *dastarkhvān*.[25]

From that day to the date when we were set free, we never had to suffer living in jail cells, wearing prisoner garbs, or eating in the mess with other prisoners. So, for all practical purposes, we became free persons on that day, even though we stayed confined to Black Water for another eighteen years. People started inviting us to dinners at their homes. Some of the meals that we were fed were more wonderful and exquisite than anything I had ever tasted in India! We used to dread having to eat miserable prison food the rest of our lives; the Absolute Almighty removed that dread from our hearts by gracing us with the bounty that only He can provide.

On that island, we saw thousands of men and women whose foreheads were branded with their name, the nature of their crime, and the punishment notation "Life Imprisonment." The branding was like the Writ of Destiny that can never be erased. It could be nothing but Divine Assistance that the Government discontinued the practice of carving and branding prisoners' foreheads shortly before our arrival, so we were spared the permanently reminding stain of lifetime incarceration.

The Andaman Islands are situated at longitude 92°47′ north, latitude 11°43′ east, in the eastern region of the Bay of Bengal, at a distance of about six hundred miles from Calcutta. This archipelago, with a circumference of 1746 miles and consisting of about one thousand isles, is known as Andaman. According to geologists, at one time these islands constituted a single piece of land which was connected to the main body of the Asian continent. Due to the effect of changing seasons and erosion from sea waves, that piece of land first broke off from the continent and floated outward, and subsequently split into thousands of small islands. To get here, steamboats take five days from Calcutta and three days from Rangoon. The distance and direction to some cities from here are as follows: Moulmein is three hundred miles northeast, Singapore four hundred miles southeast, Penang three hundred fifty miles east, Nicobar or Nancowry eighty miles south, Madras eight hundred miles west, Ceylon eight hundred miles southwest.

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[23] Muḥammad Ja'far Thānēsarī, Maulvī Aḥmad 'Alī, and Maulvī Aḥmadu'l-Lāh.

[24] Likely the Chief Clerk's house.

[25] A *dastarkhvān* or feast-spread is the equivalent of a tablecloth on which the dishes are served, but it is spread on the floor and the guests eat sitting around it.

The islands are all hilly, with very little flat terrain in them. The highest mountain is Mount Harriet at an elevation of 1116 feet above sea level. There is no fresh water stream or river in the islands. Near some hills and rocks there are springs of pure water, but these springs flow only during the rainy season and dry up when the rain stops. Fresh water is mostly obtained from wells that abound here. To the north of Port Blair, there is a mountain full of sulfur that emits flames all the time.

Lions and tigers are the only beast found in the forests of this region. The spit of swallows is valued highly here for its aphrodisiacal properties. It is regarded as superior to the meat of desert lizards for providing those medicinal benefits and is sold at prices comparable to those for gold and silver.

In the forests of this area grow thousands of species of trees with fine, strong wood. Most of these trees cannot be found in our countries. There are also numerous varieties of the willow tree. Very high quality canes made from their wood are sold all over the world as expensive gift items. From the seas around here, people extract beautiful coral sticks that resemble dark colored snakes, and conches and seashells of all colors and sizes. These are also exported all over the world. Most kinds of trees found in warm climate regions grow here naturally, for example, mango, tamarind, jambul, jackfruit, lakoocha, nutmeg, coconut, and betel leaf.

Several forests have been cleared and have given way to between fifty and a hundred new villages and farms. In the farms, people are now planting various vegetables and fruits suitable for the warm climate here; rice, corn, maize, mung beans, and sugarcane are being grown in abundance. But wheat, chickpeas, and other grains found in countries with colder climates do not grow at all here, so the Government imports wheat and chickpeas from Calcutta and sells these at the rate of seven pice per pound, that is, one and a quarter anna per seer.[26] Since grain is always available and its price is fixed, the country never experiences food shortages or famines.

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[26] The main coin of the time was the rupee. Its sub-denominations anna, paisa, and pie (plural pice) had their worth defined by 1 rupee = 16 annas = 64 paisas = 192 pice. Seer was a unit of weight approximately equal to 2.2 pounds.

The climate of these islands is pleasant and healthy, and probably there is no other place on the earth with such a wonderful climate. Contagious diseases like cholera, smallpox, typhoid, and conjunctivitis simply do not exist here. During the twenty years we spent here, we did not hear a single report of anyone afflicted by any of these diseases. Similarly, no one suffers from head lice, clothing lice, fleas, ticks, and the like. Even bothersome pests and insects like mosquitoes are absent.

Because of the equatorial location of these islands, days and nights are of nearly equal duration throughout the year, with negligible variation in different seasons. The climate is neither hot nor cold, and is somewhat like that in our country during the months of *Čait* and *Baisāk͟h*.[27] In December and January, one needs a sheet to cover oneself at night. The summer months are never hot, and the loo[28] never blows. No one needs any special winter clothes. No one uses quilts or comforters, so cotton is not to be seen anywhere and the carding and combing professions are unknown. The spring and autumn seasons do not occur, and the trees are full of green leaves all year round. Perhaps the Wise, Omniscient Creator has made the weather here suit the savage natives who move around as naked as they were born. These people would simply die if the weather turned any warmer or cooler.

The rain is abundant here. During the eight months from May to November, it rains continuously day and night. For that reason, houses are built with sloping roofs. The flat roofs made of dry mud that we have in our country would not last a day in the rain that falls here. Hail and wind storms are unknown. The jungles are very dense and hard to pass through. Trees are remarkably tall, as if they are conversing with the heavens. When a tree is felled, its branches and leaves spread over hundreds of yards.

There is no venom in the bites of snakes and scorpions here, but the millipedes are extremely poisonous.

From ancient times, a primitive people who live in the nude has inhabited the jungles here. Neither men nor women ever put on any clothes; in fact, they do not know what clothes are. Not much is known about these people. It has not been ascertained, for example, from which other country or when they arrived here, and whether they have always lived as savages or were civilized at some earlier time. It is said that these people are not cannibals. They also do not have body hair.

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[27] These months of the Subcontinental calendar correspond to late spring.

[28] An intense, hot dry wind that sometimes blows in the Subcontinent on very hot days.

The first person to discover this island was Lieutenant Blair, a British naval officer, who arrived here about one hundred years ago, and after whom the island got named Port Blair. At that time the British Government decided to turn the island into a penal colony for criminals condemned to life imprisonment, and settlements were built here for that purpose. But due to the hardships of life and climate, the place was abandoned around 1796. The Government needed it again after the Indian Uprising of 1857, so it was colonized anew, starting in March 1858, and the first prisoners brought here were the people who took part in the Uprising.

Chapter 20: The Native Andamanese

For a long time, the primitive natives resisted the British occupation of the Andaman Islands. During the rule of Dr. Walker, the first Superintendent, the natives organized themselves into an army and twice raided the British, first at Haddo, then at Aberdeen. The British eventually subdued them with diplomacy. In the past, these natives used to be violent and sanguinary toward non-natives. But now, whenever we encounter them in the jungle or settled areas, they treat us with much courtesy.

The natives usually range in height between four feet and five feet four inches. Like the black Africans, their complexion is very dark; their heads are of a very round shape, and their eyes seem to be bulging out. The hair on their heads resembles sheep hair.[29] They are very strong, with muscular bodies. The entire population of the natives in the archipelago is comprised of twelve tribes, each with its own language that has little in common with the languages of other tribes.

These aboriginals believe in an invisible Deity that is the Creator of all there is in the world, but has not been Himself created by anyone. He has existed forever in the past and will exist forever in the future. He is greater and more powerful than any creature. He lives in a beautiful, perfect palace in the sky. It is in this palace that the rain, thunder, and lightning experienced on earth are produced. He is the source of all nourishment and all good things that the creatures receive. At the same time, it is His command that is the cause of why any creature dies. He has a wife, named Čānā Pālak, who, like Him, was not created by anyone and whose existence is eternal. She is below Him in rank. Her main task is to create fish, which she then drops into the sea.

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[29] Probably here the author means very curly, tightly coiled hair.

The natives also believe in the Devil, and think that it is the Devil who tempts people to commit evil deeds. Actually, they believe in two devils: the Land's Devil, called Iram Čaugalā, and the Sea's Devil, Jūrūvinḍā. If someone dies suddenly on the land, they think Iram Čaugalā killed him, and if someone dies at sea, they think Jūrūvinḍā drowned him. They also believe in male and female angels and think the angels live in the jungle where their job is to protect humans. They also believe in the existence of ghosts, but consider them without any power or influence. The natives do not practice any worship rituals.

They also believe that at one time a Great Flood occurred and the waters covered the whole world. Their ancestors survived the flood by building a boat and taking refuge in it. They had to remain in the boat for many days because the flood persisted for a long time. When the waters finally receded, the boat landed on the top of some mountain within the Andamans.

These people do not have count words beyond two. To count more than two things they point with their fingers.

The natives move around naked. The women cover only their private parts with small leaves hung with a thread. Both men and women tattoo their bodies with honeycomb or checkered patterns, usually with the aid of pieces of glass from broken bottles as tattooing instruments. Neither men nor women let any hair grow on their head or face. Head hair, beards, and mustaches are clipped closely, again using pieces of glass from broken bottles.

Their marriage ceremonies are extremely simple. In preparation for the wedding, brown-colored fats are rubbed on the bodies of the bride and groom to give them a tawny appearance. The whole tribe gathers for the ceremony and one man in the group officiates as follows: He carries the groom to the bride, places a bundle of bows and arrows near the groom, and explains to him that he will henceforth be responsible for taking care of the bride and for feeding her by hunting with those tools. Then he loudly pronounces the words "Ab Ik" which is supposed to signify: "Keep her. She is your wife now." This makes the marriage official. Marriage is permanent, as there is no possibility of divorce or separation during the lifetime of the spouses. Adultery after marriage is unknown in their society.

Women do not seek privacy or seclusion from men during child birth. Labor and childbirth take place in public, in the company of both men and women. After the baby is born, one attending woman uses leaves as a fan to ward off flies and another cuts the umbilical cord and holds the baby in her lap. On the day of the birth, some woman other than the mother nurses the baby, but starting on the second day the mother herself nurses the baby. The mother starts moving around and walking almost immediately after delivery. There are no special dietary restrictions and no special diets like *ačẖvānī*[30] for the new mother; immediately after delivery, she starts eating every kind of food available in the jungle.

When a child grows up, he learns to play with bows and arrows as his first toys.

Their residences consist of minimal, short-term, very small structures, erected by spreading leaves over the top of four poles. The huts contain no property or furnishings of any kind. The bow and arrow are the natives' only possessions and are, in truth, their lifeline.

They also build little dinghies in which they travel from island to island. They carry their ancestors' skulls with them wherever they go. When a guest arrives from another island, he first sits at a location outside the group of huts and is served his meal there. After the meal, he moves into any hut that he wishes, where the first thing that the guest and the hosts do is to weep together.

The natives do not do any farming, nor do they eat grains. Their staple consists mainly of seafood, such as fish, crabs, sea turtles, etc., which they roast on open fires and eat without adding salt or spices of any kind. They do also eat berries, the roots of certain plants, the leaves and fruits of certain trees growing in the wild, swine flesh, and honey.

They learn diving from childhood and become such skilled divers that perhaps no other people in the world can match their expertise. Similarly, they are extraordinary marksmen. Without exception, every one of them knows how to shoot, and rarely misses the target.

There are no physicians among the Andamanese, either of Western or of indigenous variety. They try to cure every illness by phlebotomy. When someone gets sick, then he himself or one of his relatives lets some blood out from his veins, the whole procedure being done rather clumsily and cruelly by puncturing the veins with the sharp edge of a broken glass bottle.

When someone dies, the body is placed in a basket. It is forcibly bent so the knees touch the chest and the limbs are tightly bound with tree bark. This basket is then buried in the ground and a fire is lit near the grave. A month or two after the burial, the body is dug out, and then, after some kind of mourning ritual is performed, the bones from the body are distributed among relatives and friends. People hold these bones as dear as their own selves. Other dead bodies[31] are not buried, but are either placed on an elevated platform or hung from a tree branch.

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[30] *Ačẖvānī* is a special thick tonic prepared with such ingredients as nuts, aniseed, turmeric, clarified butter, and sugar.

[31] It is not clear what the author means by "other dead bodies." It could refer

The natives believe that death ends existence for good; they do not believe in reincarnation or rebirth after death for reward or punishment for one's deeds in the worldly life.

They do sing and dance, but do not use any musical instruments, nor do they have any idea of musical notes. They do not practice any religion, or have any priests or religious authorities, but they are an honest, upright, truthful, and sincere people, with a certain morality and humaneness of their own.

In the past, these people placed no value on money. Given any coins, such as paisas, rupees, or guineas, they would examine them carefully and then throw them away. But now they have developed an appreciation of money. Indeed, so much greed has crept into the natives that they now ask visitors for money.

Their life span is very short. Girls mature very fast and by the time a woman reaches the age of thirty she looks very old and haggard.

Some time ago, an Indian man named Dūdh Nāth had married an Andamanese woman from the jungle, but on his release from jail, he went back to India, deserting the poor woman.

From 1858 to 1865, the climate of the archipelago was very hostile, indeed, poisonous and fatal. Most wounds used to get infected in two or three days and start to rot, and the affected persons used to die in about four days. Getting wounded was, in effect, a death sentence. The scurvy disease was also prevalent here. This is a seafaring disease in which sores develop around the mouth, the calves become as stiff as a stone, and the sick man dies in no time. Thousands of prisoners perished because of this disease.

Chapter 21: Life in the Andamans

I am thankful to God that a year before our arrival there all the diseases had vanished and the island had become the envy of Kashmir in the quality of its climate. We did not suffer there from even a headache. Our imprisoned life turned out to be one of considerable comfort and luxury.

Because it was a new settlement and was rife with diseases, the regulations that the British initially imposed on prisoners were rather lenient and the prisoners were treated quite gently. But as the climate improved

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to the remaining parts of the dug out body whose bones were given away, or the corpses of strangers, or dead animals.

and the population grew, the regulations became draconian. The conditions in the jails in India too became harsh during this period. But we happened to arrive during the interim period, in which the climate had become agreeable but the rules were not yet stringent. Thus, as soon as we arrived, we were indulged with ample comfort and luxury, and were given satisfactory positions and salaries, all in accordance with the laws of the Islands.

Soon after our arrival, the laws started to be toughened. Ultimately, the newly arriving prisoners were required to do hard labor for their first ten years, were fed meals only in the mess, had to wear prisoner uniforms, and were lodged in barracks. They were not to be treated with the least kindness. For example, here is a quotation from the Andaman Regulation[32] issued in 1876: "Being transported overseas for life makes it necessary and compulsory for the convict to do hard labor and subsist on nutrition that is just enough to stay alive." However, the newer, stricter laws applied only to the newer prisoners arriving after their promulgation, and the older prisoners like us were exempted from them.

I noticed there that the Indian Uprising of 1857 caused the imprisonment of scores of kings, nawabs, landlords, theologians, jurists, religious court judges, deputy collectors, justices, high officials, lieutenants, commanders, governors, etc. But on account of their dark skins and Indian origin, these august Indian noblemen, who used to be escorted by hundreds or thousands of servants, had to eat the barbaric ration given to low-caste convicts and had to do hard labor along with the riffraff. But the European criminals of white complexion were fed and clothed like the British soldiers, as were the pitch-dark half-breeds who wore English dress or professed to be Christians. These people were allotted little bungalows to live in, and were provided government-paid servants to take care of them. Furthermore, any white or mulatto who got a license also received a monthly cash allowance of up to fifty rupees.

A person could live with all that, but the following incident of 1879 reduced people to tears. In 1879, an unfortunate prince from Jagannath Puri who had already been hounded by the newspapers, was convicted and brought to Kala Pani. Owing to his dark complexion, he ended up eating and doing hard labor with low-caste criminals. Whenever he could not finish his assigned arduous tasks due to his delicate constitution, he was punished by caning, confinement, and millstone duty. Unable to cope with these hardships, this prince promptly died in Viper Jail. Around the same time, a Mr. LeMaitre arrived as a prisoner from the Oudh area. Though this Christian person had a dark complexion, he was regaled with excellent meals with the British thanks to his European name and Western dress. He was soon provided a well-furnished house and various means for comfortable living. Moreover, instead of hard labor, he was given a clerical job in the Deputy Commissioner's Court. As that unfortunate prince and this lucky Christian had arrived there at the same time, the partiality towards European garb and the disregard of Indian nobility hurt everyone deeply.

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[32] Officially called the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Regulation, 1876.

Chapter 22: Marital Bliss

I consider the following a matter of kind fortune and Providential Grace. Just a week after our arrival in the Andamans, fifty people who had been imprisoned for involvement in the 1857 Indian Uprising and who had also been occupying positions such as petition writer, *jamadār*, etc., were transferred, on the request of Prince Brooks, to the Sarawak Island located to the east of the Malayan region of Singapore. This move created many nice clerical vacancies. My qualifications were already well known here because of newspaper stories about me and because of personal testimonies by Maulvī Aḥmadu'l-Lāh. So, almost as soon as I landed, I was appointed Deputy Head Clerk in the Court attached to the offices of the Superintendent and the Chief Commissioner. The benefits of this position included a servant whose wages were fully paid by the Government. Also [unlike the prisoners living in the barracks] I was free to move about, with no restrictions whatever.

At the time, I was twenty-seven years old, essentially in the prime of my youth. Celibacy was not desirable for me, either from a religious or from a worldly point of view, so I requested that my wife who was living in the mainland be allowed to join me. However, the law did not permit that, so a few months after my arrival here I got married to a newly arrived Kashmiri woman. She was very young and was brought here because of a sudden calamity. Having lived with me for a while, she became a very religious and advertent person.

As time went by I noticed that, in place of whatever was taken from me in India, I was beginning to be given back something better. Moreover, those who had actively sought to destroy me, had started suffering setbacks of their own. By the time I returned to India, all of these people had received their due retribution, commensurate with their deeds, within their lifetime.

On 25 December 1867, while I was residing on Perseverance Point Island, Maulvī ʿAbdu'r-Raḥīm also arrived in the Andamans. He was appointed Clerk, first in the coastal area and later in a hospital. After serving his sentence for nine years, he received his ticket, and started his own business as a cloth merchant. He was still in the cloth trade when he was released from prison.

Chapter 23: The Fatal Accidents

[In the book, this paragraph appears at the end of the previous Chapter.] In coastal areas, shipping crew members and tourists often suffer marine accidents. The people of India are totally unaware of these catastrophes. In the Andamans, many men and boats become casualties of the sea every year.

In my twenty years, I encountered several of those misfortunes, but each time when there was no material means of rescue and I thought I was about to drown, I implored the Caring, Powerful God with all my heart, and each time the Almighty preserved my life. Of the various disasters of which I was a victim but survived, I want to briefly mention three.

I was traveling once from Ross Island to Perseverance Point Island. When the boat approached Perseverance Point, the sea became fiercely stormy and the boat seemed about to sink. Suddenly, a powerful wave lifted the boat up, very close to a stone bridge platform. A passenger and I swiftly jumped out of the boat onto the bridge. Moments after we had escaped to the bridge, another wave pulled the boat back and then hurled it with a terrible force against the bridge. The boat was shattered to pieces. All the remaining passengers were seriously injured.

A very similar accident happened once when I was on a trip from Aberdeen to Ross Island. A mighty wave was about to crash our boat against a bridge when we jumped onto the bridge. The boat then hit the bridge and was split into small pieces. Several passengers were wounded badly, narrowly escaping drowning.

The third incident occurred at a time when the entire staff of our Court was sailing in a boat going from Ross to Aberdeen. In the middle of the journey, we encountered such a severe storm that we lost all hope of surviving and were certain we were as good as dead. It was also raining very hard. No shore or rescue operator was in sight. It was so dark that it would have been impossible for anyone on the coast to see the trouble we were in. The mast broke and the boat started filling with water. There was no one to call and no means to save ourselves, so I called the One Who listens to our cries for help and catches the hand of those left behind. Just as I was praying, a large boat came into view; we were able to see

Sardār Bag͟hēl Sĩg͟h in it. Finding us in such a pitiable condition, he expeditiously took us all into his boat and delivered us safely to our destination.

In January 1868, I was transferred to Haddo Island and appointed Station Clerk there. Maulvī Yaḥyā ʿAlī passed away at Ross on 20 February 1868. Although I was in Haddo, far away from Ross, and had no knowledge even of his illness, Destiny arranged to take me to Ross. I arrived just as his funeral procession was ready and the funeral prayer was about to start. Several of my co-defendants in the [Ambala] Trial had already participated in the ritual washing and clothing of his body.

My wife was a spiritual disciple of Maulvī Yaḥyā ʿAlī and very devoted to him. She was deeply grieved over his death. Indeed, only about two and a quarter months later, on 30 April 1868, she also departed for Paradise. Perhaps her imprisonment and deportation from India were all meant to furnish a blessed end to her short life.

Chapter 24: Business Venture

After my wife's demise, I sold her jewelry and other possessions and sent the sum of about three hundred rupees to my senior wife in Delhi. I asked her to buy merchandise such as shoes with that money and send it to me, because goods from Delhi could be sold in Port Blair for three to four times their purchase price in Delhi. Most of the merchandise was lost in shipment, however. The small portion that arrived in 1870, two years after being posted from Delhi, was extensively damaged. I managed to get about one hundred fifty rupees for it, thus incurring a loss of one hundred fifty rupees. I sent this amount again to a friend in Calcutta to get some other merchandise, but my Bengali coworkers tipped off the authorities so my bill of exchange was seized. Being a government employee, I was not allowed to engage in private business. The bill of exchange was offered on behalf of an officer—an Extra-Assistant Commissioner—and the merchandise was to be delivered to a regular businessman. The letter itself, requesting the shipment, was written by me. The envelope, together with my enclosed letter and the bill of exchange, was presented to the Chief Commissioner. Undoubtedly, the circumstances required the forfeiture of the bill of exchange and some kind of punishment for me. It is only due to God's kindness that I was spared and the bill of exchange was returned to me, but the merchant who received the bill of exchange cashed it and ran away from Calcutta. Clearly, Providence did not favor trading as a vocation for me so I never tried that again.

After the death of this wife, I remained celibate for two years. Haddo Island, where I was stationed as an officer during this period, was full of ladies. Several women wanted to ensnare me, but an invisible Heavenly Shield protected me all the time and held me back from the path of dishonor. My job required me to deal with loose women all the time. In fact, there were several official duties which often necessitated my receiving them at my home, and they used to flirt with me on such occasions. But who can destroy what God wishes to preserve?

As this condition persisted, I applied once again for my wife to be allowed to move from Panipat to join me, but this time she herself seemed hesitant to relocate. Later she showed some willingness, but the authorities rejected my application. So, the only course left for me was to get married to an upright woman. I prayed to God to reveal to me whomever He intended to unite with me.

With the assistance of some of my friends, I entered into nuptial negotiations with two Punjabi Muslim women, one after the other, but in each case the negotiations came to an abrupt end in spite of consent on behalf of each party and the absence of any apparent impediment. Why Providence blocked this marriage possibility was a complete mystery to me at that time. Since both women were confined to their barracks, there was no available means to judge the rectitude of their character, but after some time passed, and after getting married to other men, they turned out to be licentious and quite debauched. Then the reason there was a Divine Intervention to prevent me from marrying either of these women became quite clear to me. I was very grateful to God for this favor as all this time I was looking for a young, virtuous woman.

Chapter 25: Second Marriage

A Hindu woman from the Almora district in Kashmir and belonging to the Brahmin caste arrived in the Andamans as a new prisoner. She was lodged in the barracks at Haddo and placed under my charge. I found her to be a very upright, shy person. At the same time, she seemed very strict about her Hindu religion. She could not bear standing close to a Muslim woman, or even coming in contact with her clothes. The Muslim women living in her barrack were exasperated by her prejudiced ways.

One day, in the course of conversation, I said to her: “If you embrace Islam, it will be good for you in this world as well as in the hereafter and you will be spared from Hell fire.” At first she was astonished at my comment, but, from the beginning of time, she was destined to become a

Muslim and be the mother of my many children. That is why, even though she was born into a Brahmin family in a mountainous area where there are no Muslims, polytheism and idolatry always repelled her and she never took part in idol worship. She herself did not know the reason for this disinterest. Noticing her attitude and demeanor, an astrologer predicted to her mother that her daughter would soon be separated from her.

At the same time that my Kashmiri wife died here in April 1868, my Brahmin wife [to be] was suddenly charged in a trial and arrested in Almora. Briefly, the particulars of this case are as follows: A girl and my wife were once playing near a well. The girl's foot slipped and she fell down the well and was severely injured. My wife had no part in this accident, but because of an age-old enmity between the families of the girl and my wife, the girl's parents filed a lawsuit accusing my innocent wife of attempted murder. The girl's wound soon healed completely, so there really was no legal justification for my wife's conviction and life imprisonment. But the reason of her arrest in the first place must have been that the Wise and All Powerful had intended to transport her to Port Blair and make her my wife.

On the very first night after her arrest, she had a dream at dawn in which she saw the radiant face of an old Muslim sage. He gave her a kick and said to her, "Get up! Perform the namaz and recite the *duʿā*! Your arrest is a blessing for you." She had never seen such a face or appearance before, nor had she ever heard the words namaz and *duʿā*.[33] She woke up in a great fright, narrated her dream to a Muslim among the guards, and asked him for its interpretation. He said, "For sure, you are going to become a Muslim in the course of this imprisonment." At that time this interpretation seemed to her too repulsive and impossible to accept, but as it was ordained, and as her dream truly meant, she accepted my suggestion for converting to Islam. Then she also agreed to marry me.

Soon afterwards, the holy month of Ramadan started. On the twenty-seventh evening of Ramadan, I organized a big feast during which she embraced Islam. After she had thoroughly learned the Pillars of Islam and the prayer rituals, etc., I reported our intention to wed to the authorities and married her on 15 April 1870. Hundreds of people attended the ceremony. The marriage was solemnized by Maulānā Aḥmadu'l-Lāh. A splendid reception took place the next day.

This wife gave birth to ten of my children, eight of whom are still alive. This is the wife who accompanied me from Port Blair to India. She has spent twenty-two years with me in the best of companionship, loyalty, and faithfulness. *Oh God, multiply [Thy blessings on her], and multiply them again.*

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[33] Supplication after namaz.

Chapter 26: With Friends Like These, Who Needs Enemies?

After arriving in Port Blair, from time to time I wrote letters to Ḥajī Muḥammad Shafīʿ of Ambala. In these letters, which were written in the form of poems, I informed him of my comfortable life, marriage, and employment in the Government like the free people here. I greatly exaggerated my comforts so as to make those people jealous who had given false testimony to implicate innocent Muslims and in return had only earned partial freedom and rather disgraceful lives.

I never received any reply to those letters, but in the meantime I came to know that some people had passed them to the local authorities in a show of loyalty. From there they reached the Government of India. The report that the Andaman prisoners were enjoying an easy life became a subject of much consternation. The Government ordered the Superintendent of Port Blair to investigate the matter. Had Providence not favored me, and had the officials of Port Blair not themselves pleaded my case, and had the cessation of facilities already granted to me not been against the Port Blair regulations, I surely would have been subjected to hard labor. I believe that it was a matter of Divine Assistance and a manifestation of Divine Power that while Mr. John Lawrence—the Governor General!—did want to enforce the hard labor for life that was already in my sentence, God Almighty rescued me from that fate.

Divine Assistance was also behind the circumstance that, at the time of our transportation to Port Blair, most of the officials there were from the Madras territory. These people were not acquainted with the 1857 Uprising or the campaign against the Wahhabis and were, hence, unbiased and impartial. They treated us without the least discrimination. In fact, until 1870, they were exceedingly kind and courteous towards us since they deemed our conduct and behavior to be very satisfactory. But then Dr. Hunter narrated our trial with much distortion and exaggeration, making a snake out of a rope and a mountain out of a molehill, and declared that the Wahhabis and rebels are one and the same. Then followed the appointment of English gentlemen from Bengal Corps. These changes made us the scapegoats. In the streets, people pointed their fingers at us. Many officers looked high and low for legal ruses to snare us. But who can harm a person guarded by the Exalted Protector? I observed that each time some high official tried to wrong us, someone else with a higher rank stood up and took our side.

During the reign of Colonel Man, a powerful European official instigated an attempt to have me falsely tried for abetting in a case of misappropriation of funds. Even Colonel Man, who was a fair administrator, became so irate with me that he summoned me to Court at once. Some of my friends advised me to fallaciously plead ignorance of the transactions, for it is permitted to lie for the sake of saving one's life, but I resolved to tell the truth regardless of the consequences. When the trial ensued, I was the first one called to testify and the Colonel started writing down my testimony. I stated exactly what I had witnessed, namely, that Overseer Haywood—the plaintiff—seized the assets of Jamadār[34] Ḥamīd Khān—the defendant—wherever the former found them, auctioned them off or sold them, and appropriated the proceeds for himself. I admitted that I accompanied the plaintiff during his raids, but that was because it was my duty as Station Scrivener. Consequent to my testimony, Mr. Haywood had to return all the money to Ḥamīd Khān. Mr. Haywood was also dismissed from his job as Overseer, which fetched him a salary of a hundred rupees per month, and he was expelled from the Islands. I, on the other hand, came back home, exonerated of all accusations.

Chapter 30: Learning English

Even though I resided in Port Blair, I did not learn any English until after the incident of Lord Mayo's assassination. In 1872, on the exhortation of Rām Sarūp, who knew English, I made an earnest effort to learn the language and I gained reasonable fluency in speaking, reading, and writing. My facility with English improved rapidly since I used to tutor the British officers in the Persian, Urdu, and Hindi languages and spent much time conversing with them in order to explain the lessons and while checking their English translation exercises. Also, at that time, due to the shortage of clerks, other government employees were not prohibited from preparing applications and petitions, so I too started writing these documents in English. This additional work was not only instrumental in my acquiring advanced linguistic skills, it also resulted in my collecting thousands of rupees. Indeed, with these two occupations, tutoring the officials and writing petitions, my total monthly earnings were never less than a hundred rupees.

Being the only Muslim who was conversant in English, I could assist fellow Muslims in their dealings with the courts, and I managed to get many of them acquitted from terrible allegations and trials. That my knowledge benefited many people is likely to be remembered for a long time. Certainly, those who were exculpated and escaped death by hanging will not forget me for the rest of their lives!

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[34] A title applied to army officers of Indian, not British, nationality.

By a strange coincidence, the order to prohibit government employees from writing petitions was promulgated on the very same day that my release was announced. It appears that the petition-writing permission was a bounty from the Lord for me, like many others He bestowed upon me. Now, should a government employee prepare a petition even inadvertently, he would be discharged from his position the same day.

Having learned English, I visited many large libraries and browsed through hundreds of books on a variety of disciplines and arts. Perhaps no language exists whose grammar English authors have not compiled, nor any country whose history has not been described in great depth and detail in some English books. The English language is the abode of sciences and arts. A person who does not know English cannot be fully aware of world affairs. Unless one learns English, one cannot be business-minded and dynamic. Nor can a person earn a living these days without learning English.

But while this language offers much worldly benefit, the harm and peril it poses for the faith are graver. If a young man who has not yet thoroughly absorbed the teachings of the Qurʾān and the Traditions of the Prophet learns this language and reads books of various kinds and of different disciplines as I used to do, he will surely become a freethinking, irreligious, uncultured atheist, to such a degree that to reform him would not just be difficult, but utterly impossible.

Chapter 31: Atheizing Influence of Western Education

Learning the English language is not, by itself, harmful, but English books belonging to certain disciplines contain ideas that are opposed to the teachings of the prophets, peace be upon them. Someone who is not thoroughly acquainted with the Islamic Faith is bound to turn into an irreligious atheist because of those ideas. Such books will fill his mind with doubts that will last throughout his life. And due to the same disease of mind and heart, he will become neglectful of religious duties and prayers. And although he might claim to adhere to Islam, in truth he will not be a Muslim.

Let me narrate how that knowledge affected me personally, in spite of all my religious learning. Thanks to that knowledge, I stopped offering *tahajjud*,[35] which I had been performing punctually since my childhood days. Force of habit woke me every night at the hour of prayer, but I just stayed on my cot from 2:00 AM to dawn rather than get up, do ablutions, and perform the prayer. I stopped attending Friday assemblies and other congregational prayers. I lost all interest in reading or listening to the Qurʾān or the Traditions. All I wanted to do instead was read some English book. During the month of Ramadan, I did have the urge to read the Holy Qurʾān, and even used to pick up a copy and open it, but then I could not bring myself to recite it, as if my tongue became tremendously heavy and inert. Habituated in the past to reciting very long supplications, now I fell into a lethargic state in which I could not raise my hands long enough for the briefest, four-word prayers. I was reduced to the routine of offering only the five obligatory prayers, and even this seemed as burdensome as carrying a mountain. I was in danger of discontinuing even the obligatory prayers and fasts, as the Devil was inciting me to drop those altogether by trying to convince me they were of no value. I had previously committed to memory three parts of the Qurʾān,[36] but just a few of the last Qurʾānic chapters were retained in my memory, the rest being all forgotten. Similarly, the hundreds of Traditions of the Prophet that I knew by heart seemed to have been erased from my memory.

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[35] The predawn prayer.

Deviant thoughts and profane acts were polluting my heart. It was becoming sicker with the passage of each day and seemed to be in the throes of an impending death. To add to my woes, the Devil was continually misleading me with false justifications that even this miserable condition was best for me. I became deluded into thinking that simply uttering the declaration *There is no god but God* would suffice for my admission to Paradise, and that I did not have to heed the prescriptions of religious law. I remember that the Devil even used to fill my heart, as is his mission, with the thought of disavowing God's existence, and sometimes I used to see no weakness in the arguments of disbelievers and atheists, finding them convincing.

Thus I was on the precipice of infidelity, and was about to fall in. This precarious state lasted much longer than just a few days. But, either because of Divine Favor or some earlier good deeds of mine, I still felt the terror of my destruction and of going astray, and often used to recite this invocation: "O One Who sees all, lead this blind one by the hand!" Ultimately, the Compassionate and Forgiving God took pity on me. In December 1880, all of a sudden, I fell severely ill with a hard abscess on my thigh. I lost all appetite. For about a month and a half, copious amounts of pus continued flowing from the wound. I was hospitalized for five weeks and my condition deteriorated so much that friends and acquaintances concluded I was about to die. In this state, I wept and cried and pleaded with the Almighty. Recalling my sins, I implored God for forgiveness and vowed that if I survived I would again take up praying *tahajjud* and studying the Qurʾān and Hadith.

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[36] The Qurʾān is divided into thirty parts.

I soon perceived the hints of my entreaties being granted. The sick feeling in my heart eased. The signs of God's mercy and favor became manifest. The Qurʾānic verses, the Traditions, and the Supplications that I had forgotten started returning to memory. I began experiencing serenity and ecstasy during prayers. I became convinced that my illness was meant for my reform and instruction.

After returning from the hospital, I renewed my study of the Traditions and Qurʾānic exegesis. In a short while, my condition became better than in the earlier days. There were some portions of the Qurʾān and the Traditions that previously I could not easily bring myself to recite, as if my tongue was obstructed from pronouncing and reciting them. I read the same verses day and night now, and I noticed that such reading filled my mind with elation and my heart with rapture. The very supplications for which it had seemed so trying just to raise my hands, I now repeated for hours and could continue forever. I have come to realize that the propensity for praying to God and obeying Him is itself a blessing from Him. It is entirely up to Him to grant this blessing to one person and not to another.

Chapter 37: Parting Look at Port Blair

Earlier, when I reported my arrival in Port Blair, I also provided some relevant geographical information and discussed the condition of the native Andamanese. Now before I mention my departure from Port Blair, I would like to describe the laws of this island and the nature and habits of the residents here.

Like other colonies, this island has a permanent municipal government. The Chief Commissioner of Andaman is entitled to promulgate any law that he deems necessary and to empower any of his deputies with whatever civil or martial authority he wishes. The Chief Commissioner is effectively also the Session Judge. His word is the supreme law and his decision cannot be appealed. Only the death sentence has to be confirmed by the Governor General's Session Council. In all other matters, whether civil or martial, the Chief Commissioner's person is also the High Court. No ship, person, baggage, or parcel of goods is allowed to enter here without the Chief Commissioner's permission. Nor can anyone leave the island without his approval. His residence is in the capital Ross, and he receives a monthly salary of three thousand rupees.

This Division is comprised of two districts: South Andaman district with Aberdeen as the seat of administration, and North Andaman district with Chatham as the seat of administration. The District Commissioners have as subordinates a large number of Assistant Commissioners and Extra Assistant Commissioners. The settlement's Code of Conduct and Regulations, first formulated in 1858, are constantly undergoing amendment. They seem to be turning ever more austere and stringent, in accordance with the Persian proverb "Each newcomer added to whatever existed already."

Every year about two thousand new prisoners arrive from India. The current prisoner population amounts to about 14,000. The prisoner's fetters are removed a month after disembarkation. There are no separate jail buildings, so the prisoners are lodged in barracks under the supervision of officers who are prisoners themselves. As in India, prisoners are made to do hard labor during the day. They are provided two full meals daily. They sleep in the same barracks.

No police or military platoon is employed to protect the barracks; such guard duty is assigned to the prisoner officers. Thus, officers, in other words senior prisoners, carry out all the security and supervision of other prisoners, allotting work to them and overseeing that work. These people wear red headscarves and have a badge hanging from their necks. They receive a food ration as well as cash salaries, dependent on their rank, from the Government. The new prisoners also start receiving some salary after three to four years, provided their conduct is good. Once salaried, they can also become badged officers.

Ten years of good conduct make a prisoner eligible to receive the so-called "ticket," allowing him to live outside the confines of the barracks. He can then live in any town or village, and can earn his living by engaging in any profession of his choice. There are fifty to sixty such settlements populated by ticketed prisoners, with the prisoners themselves appointed to such duties as guards, land supervisors, and land accountants. Those who get the ticket for farming, receive fifteen *bīg̲has*[37] of newly tilled land, and no farm tax is levied on them for three years. Indeed, they sometimes also receive additional financial aid. A person's acquiring a ticket is tantamount to his being free to do whatever he wants.

Women prisoners are housed on a different island and they live in barracks supervised by female officers who arrived earlier as prisoners. Women are also required to do labor which consists of such work as grinding or sewing. Women receive their tickets after passing five years in the prison, but even after acquiring a ticket, a female prisoner cannot move outside her barracks unless she gets married first. After five years, a woman is permitted to marry any man she chooses. A male prisoner is allowed to marry after getting his ticket.

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[37] *Bīg̲ha* is a land measure equivalent to about half an acre.

Any man who desires to get married needs to visit the island of female prisoners, find a woman he likes, negotiate with her, usually by paying her something, and obtain her consent to marry him. When a man and a woman agree to marry each other, they have to present to the Chief Commissioner a testament of their mutual consent to marriage as well as their commitment to living together in harmony as man and wife. After this formality, the woman moves from the female prisoners' island to her husband's abode.

Prisoners with tickets can also request permission for their spouses and children to be brought from the mainland to live with them. After a prisoner has spent twenty years in the Islands with good conduct, he is granted release from his life sentence. After this release, it is up to him whether to live in the Andamans or go back to his native country.

Once a prisoner gets his ticket, he is free to earn money and accumulate as much wealth as he can, even amounting to hundreds of thousands of rupees, of course as long as it is done by legal means. Before receiving a ticket, a prisoner needs to inform the authorities and obtain their permission to keep any assets in his own possession or to deposit them with someone else. A prisoner who is still confined in the barracks doing labor is allowed to send a letter to his family in his home country or receive a letter from abroad once each year or once every three months. But for the ticketed prisoner, the allowed frequency to send or receive letters is once per month.

Port Blair residents include the Chinese, Burmese, Malays, Singhalese, Andamanese from the jungle, Nicobarese, Kashmiris, Pashtuns, Iranians, Makranis, Arabs, Ethiopians, Parsees, Portuguese, Americans, English, Danes, French, etc., and people from all districts and cities of India, such as the Bhutanese, Nepalis, Punjabis, Sindhis, Gujaratis, Indians proper, Brij central Indian villagers, Assamese, Thals of Uttarkhand, Band Malakandis, Oriya Tilangis, Marhattas, Karnataks, Madrasis, Malayalam, Gondis, Bhils, Bengalis, Gols, Santhals, etc. When these people get together, they each speak their own language, but the language used in business and in the Court is Hindustani, which everyone learns here irrespective of his country of origin.

I think that perhaps no other place on the surface of this earth has more ethnic diversity than here. The people who have settled here represent about forty different nations and do not speak each other's languages. God has indeed created a marvel by raising a crowd here unmatched elsewhere in the world. When a Bengali man weds a Madrasi woman, or a Bhutanese man weds a Punjabi woman, and so on, the husband and wife do not understand each other's native language. When they disagree or quarrel with each other, and curse each other in their own tongues, they create a bizarre scene. When invited to a wedding, the women from various ethnic backgrounds dress in their native costumes, perform different rituals and ceremonies that belong to their own traditions, and sing and dance differently. This is, indeed, another sight worth watching!

The sectarian and ethnic prejudices that chronically plague Indians in India have disappeared here altogether. A Muslim man belonging to any clan gets married without hesitation to a Muslim woman of any other clan. Similarly, being Hindu is sufficient to unite men and women in marriage, without regard to caste. There are households in which a Brahmin man has taken a Pasin[38] for a wife, or a Jatt man has taken a Brahmin woman for a wife.

Here, the robbers and thieves so excel in their arts that they will rob you of your heart and steal the kohl from your eyes! The place abounds in tricksters, stunt artists, chameleons, mimics, clowns, *hījṛās*,[39] courtesans, chanteuses, choristers, musicians, *qavvāls*,[40] and practitioners of all sorts of arts, whether admirable or condemnable. It is also full of righteous people, as there is no island without a maulvi, pandit, dervish, or some other kind of pious person living there.

The Madrasis and Bengalis eat dried fish with much passion. They prefer dried fish that reeks like rotten animal hide to the best-cooked meat. The Burmese like *Chinese Panni*, which is prepared as follows: Fish is placed in barrels and allowed to rot until larvae appear on it. This mixture of rotten fish and insects is then ground to prepare *panni*. It has such a terrible stench that we cannot stand it even a mile away downwind. But the Burmese and Chinese sprinkle it on their dishes instead of spices, and eat it with zest. To them *panni* is the greatest blessing in the world!

There are no prostitutes or brothels here, but certainly there are many women so indecent and depraved that they would embarrass whores.

From observation I have learned that everyone is contented with his own customs, manners, language, dress, and diet. The jungle dweller is comfortable remaining in the jungle, walking around stark naked, and eating insects and worms; he prefers all that to our luxurious garments and our elegant feasts. Our meals nauseate them, and our dress bothers them as much as their nudity disgusts us. The Burmese and Chinese hold their noses upon seeing our ghee-cooked dishes. The Arabs find the strong spicy smell of our kabobs, curries, and pilafs disagreeable. The British cannot sense the fragrance of our attars. In short, one relishes whatever one's tongue and nose get accustomed to in childhood.

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[38] Feminine of *Pasee*. Pasees, considered low-caste people, sell toddy, which they prepare by fermenting sap that they collect from fruit palm trees.

[39] *Hījṛās* refers to certain people in the Indian subcontinent who are males but behave like females in manners and dress.

[40] *Qavvāls* are singers who perform mystical devotional songs in a special style called *qavvālī*.

Chapter 40: Conclusion

Having described the events of the last twenty years, I now conclude this narrative by mentioning some of the special blessings that the Lord granted me. [In the book, this statement is at the end of the previous chapter.]

Firstly, starting from the day of my imprisonment, wherever I lived, He always kept me in ease and tranquility. Not one day in my twenty years there was I required to do hard labor. Arrangements were made for me to have a comfortable life even before I arrived in Black Water, and, as soon as I arrived, I was appointed to a Government office of some consequence. Four or five years before our arrival in Black Water, the archipelago was resettled. By the time we arrived there, the jungles were cleared and horrendous maladies were totally eradicated. The place had turned into a rival of Kashmir! Our stay there was one of great comfort and luxury. We did get dispatched to a location of despair, run by prejudiced officials, but we returned in a state better than before, in good health, with family and children, and indeed, in grandeur.

Secondly, after our return, all my family members are still alive and healthy, not withstanding the utter incompatibility between the climes of Port Blair and India. Indeed, I was blessed with two more children after my return to India. By contrast, a number of other children that returned from Black Water did not survive for long in this country. Moreover, my home and this cantonment seem to be spared the effects of the epidemics and contagious diseases that overtake this region. Also, compared to the recent past, the rain has been abundant and the grain prices have stayed low since our return.

Thirdly, when I was freed after twenty years on that island, being a frail human, I was exceedingly apprehensive about where I would live in India and how I would earn a living. All my possessions, including houses, lands, and farms, had been seized by the Government and auctioned off.

The Ambala district was still administered by the same kind gentlemen that had banished us to Black Water. But while I was suffering such anxiety and depression, God, Who is the Controller of all, Compassionate, and the Swayer of Hearts, sent Captain Temple to Magistrate Camp, Ambala. In the early days of my return, when every English person detested me, he pleaded my case vigorously and liberated me from all financial worries. And when he left this country because of an official transfer, I was appointed to a reasonable position in the State of Arnoli, without my having to apply for it. I am still employed there and can live in peace and comfort. I thank God for causing that the credit for both my job and my peaceful life must go to non-Muslims, so there cannot be any suspicion that my success is due to any unfair assistance from my Muslim sympathizers.

After our return to India, we were to remain under police surveillance. This was lifted because Captain Temple personally vouched for my security. After Captain Temple's transfer, the surveillance orders were rescinded, again due to Divine Assistance and without any plea or appeal by any human, via Circular 188, dated 6 February 1888, issued by the Secretary of the Government of Punjab and addressed to the Division Commissioner of Delhi. While my other prison companions, that is, Maulvī ʿAbdu'r-Raḥīm and others, continue to be under surveillance, I am free, by the grace of God, to live wherever I wish and pursue any profession that I desire. I am constantly traveling between Lahore and Calcutta on State business. In fact, I soon intend to travel to England to attend a court trial involving the State of Arnoli. God willing, there I will meet the Honorable Dr. Hunter and several other persons who were either on my side or against me, and will make them acknowledge God's authority.

Whenever I notice that spot in the Court of Ambala where I was to hang, or pass through the vicinity of Ambala Jail where the sentence of my hanging was pronounced, or walk on the streets through which I was led to prison after being condemned to death by hanging, my heart trembles at God's omnipotence. On that day when the sentence of my death by hanging was read to me, who would have imagined, or would have had the faintest suspicion, that I would be strolling unrestrained through the rooms and corridors of that same Court? It was but the command of the All-Powerful Lord that this unworthy, obligation evading slave was made to wander and experience a variety of circumstances, and then returned to his country in a condition that is perceived as honorable and prominent by a few people. *Such is the grace of God which He bestows on whom He wills.*[41]

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[41] Qurʾān 5:54.

The reader should not take this report to be an idle tale or the proceedings of a court trial. This narrative is, indeed, one of the Signs of God. Study it thoroughly, again and again, and take heed! In regards to a similar story in his Noble Book, God Almighty says: "*Indeed in their stories, there is a lesson for men of understanding*."[42]

In accordance with God's command: *And as to the bounty of your Sustainer, do proclaim it!*[43] I have publicly narrated all of the bounties—whether overt or concealed, and as much as I could understand them—that were bestowed by the Lord of the two worlds, may His glory be extolled. Finally I pray that my efforts, labor, and sufferings, purified of all insincerity and pretense, be accepted by the Merciful God, and that the readers find this narrative instructive and informative. Amen. *O God, we make Thee our shield against them, and take refuge in Thee from their evils.*[44] ❑

— *Translated by S. Kamal Abdali*

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[42] *Ibid.*, 12:111.

[43] *Ibid.*, 93:11.

[44] This supplication is from hadith 1537 in *Sunan Abī Dāʾūd.*

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